

Subject: Yakima Herald-Republic Story This AM.....MM
To: CN=Marie Jennings/OU=R10/O=USEPA/C=US@EPA CN=Sheila
Fleming/OU=R10/O=USEPA/C=US@EPA CN=Thomas Eaton/OU=R10/O=USEPA/C=US@EPA
CN=Eric Winiacki/OU=R10/O=USEPA/C=US@EPA CN=Jennifer
MacDonald/OU=R10/O=USEPA/C=US Kowalski.Edward@epamail.epa.gov CN=Michael
Cox/OU=R10/O=USEPA/C=US@EPA
Cc: McLerran.Dennis@epamail.epa.gov Pirzadeh.Michelle@epamail.epa.gov
Dunbar.Bill@epamail.epa.gov CN=Marianne Holsman/OU=R10/O=USEPA/C=US
Philip.Jeff@epamail.epa.gov
From: CN=Mark Macintyre/OU=R10/O=USEPA/C=US
Submit Time: 12/19/2012 16:40:56

Yakima Herald-Republic

State dairy industry fires back at feds over nitrate report

Posted on December 19, 2012

<http://www.yakimaherald.com/home/624280-8/state-dairy-industry-fires-back-at-feds-over>

By ROSS COURTNEY

Yakima Herald-Republic

The Washington dairy industry took aim Tuesday at a federal report that identified dairies as the likely contributors to nitrate contamination in Lower Valley wells, saying the September study failed to lay a scientific foundation for reducing the pollution and instead created "confusion, distrust, fragmentation, uncertainty and skepticism."

The salvo, fired in a news release by the Washington State Dairy Products Commission of Lynnwood, quotes a consulting firm from Santa Fe, N.M., and a dairy expert with Texas A&M University, who conclude the report by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency lacked sufficient technical data to justify its conclusions.

Yakima County Commission Chairman Rand Elliott also criticized the EPA report in the news release, saying the science doesn't measure up.

"If the intent of the study is to draw a direct correlation to the dairies based upon scientific information, we believe it failed to do so simply because of the study's stated limitations and questionable assumptions."

Elliott submitted his opinions during a comment period on the study, which closed Nov. 30. Elliott leads the Lower Valley Groundwater Advisory Committee, a broad-based group of community and industry representatives charged with developing a plan to reduce nitrate contamination.

EPA has acknowledged shortcomings in the report and recently began drilling monitoring wells near five Lower Valley dairies that were singled out as the likely causes of the well-documented groundwater pollution.

The monitoring wells are an attempt to collect more data, officials said. "It's pretty obvious, when we released our study, we said it had some limitations," Tom Eaton, the Washington operations manager for the EPA, said in a recent interview.

Last week, EPA crews started to drill between nine and 13 wells on land owned by Yakima County just outside the property lines both down and up gradient of the five dairies named in the report. The wells will vary between 30 and 250 feet deep. Samples of water will be drawn from the shallowest aquifers.

Adam Dolsen, co-owner of Cow Palace, one of the five dairies mentioned in the report, said the results could provide better information.

"If they drill the wells right, then yeah, they should have a good idea of what's flowing under our facilities," he said. "This is just one of these steps of trying to figure out where the nitrate issue is coming from."

Cow Palace also owns a feedlot near Harrah that has three of its own monitoring wells, Dolsen said.

The other dairies in the report are DeRuyter and Sons Dairy, Liberty Dairy, Bosma Dairy and Haak Dairy, all located north of Granger and Outlook. Based on data from the Natural Resources Conservation Service, a unit of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, EPA estimates that lagoons at the dairies leak between 3.3 million and 39.6 million gallons of liquid manure combined.

Jay Gordon, executive director of the Washington Dairy Federation, called the EPA's effort to gather more information about sources of contamination a "sad" attempt at a make-up call.

"They did a crappy report and now they realize they don't have any data that's worth anything in their report," Gordon said.

Environmental activists welcome the wells but lament that taxpayers will foot the \$200,000 overall bill, which does not include EPA staff time. They'd like to see the dairies invest some of their own money.

"If they're creating the situation, they should be putting their own money into cleaning it up," said Helen Reddout of Granger, president of the Community Association for the Restoration of the Environment. "It's not our responsibility."

Mark A. MacIntyre,
Senior Public Information Officer
U.S. EPA Region 10
1200 Sixth Ave. Suite 900
Seattle, WA 98101-3123

206.553.7302(desk)
206.369.7999(cell)
macintyre.mark@epa.gov